

1 PETER 4:5-6

KINGDOM JUSTICE

⁵ *But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.* ⁶ *For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.*

Kingdom justice entails universal judgment. All will be judged, both the living and the dead. Although the judgment by men might result in the death of believers, God's judgment will result in eternal life since during their life they heard the Gospel and responded. Likewise, those men who judged the believers will be judged by God and held accountable for their deeds.

Let's not lose perspective. All this talk about judgment is not to puff us up so that we can feel superior to those who persecute us. Far from it; this passage is to reassure us in our role as witnesses for the kingdom. We are not responsible for the judgment. We are responsible for accurately testifying to the Message through our lives. Judgment is God's and he is to be trusted.

I find it impossible to love someone I am holding under judgment (as in condemnation). When we are persecuted, if I can use such a strong term for our petty harassments, we should pray that those who persecute us will come to believe the Gospel and be transformed into followers of Jesus Christ. We know that kingdom justice is God's justice, meted out by the King. As a powerful aspect of our witness, we need to live lives that testify to that truth.

O Holy Spirit, bring to my mind the name of one person who has harassed me because of my faith, or who has perpetrated evil on another believer. Empower me to pray daily for that person, that he might encounter you and be transformed and saved. Amen.